

Title: Memory, depiction of time, and philosophy of history in Vladimir Sharov's novels
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Abstract:

Vladimir Sharov, one of the leading contemporary Russian authors, writes literary historical novels with strong religious and fantastic components. The theme of human memory is important to most of his work. A historian by training, he has a PhD in Russian history of the XVII century, and he finds particularly relevant the ideas of "Moscow as the third Rome" and Russians as new chosen people. In trying to understand the tragedy of Russian history of the XX century, especially stalinism, and the roots and reasons of cruelty, civil and fratricidal wars and conflicts, he interprets Russian church schism as a seminal event that split society into two unequal, but entirely irreconcilable and intransigent factions. Sharov's approach can be called magical historicism, using the term, suggested by Alexander Etkind. His areas of interest are primarily history and religion, rather than psychology or social issues. Fantastic or whimsical elements in his novels are mostly time-related. In his books we can see three types of time: conventional time from past to future, reverse time from present to past, and the circular time that follows in the footsteps, "mythological" time. In particular he is interested in cyclical, or circular movement of history. His latest novel is aptly titled "The Return to Egypt". In one of his earlier novels, "Rehearsals" (Репетиции, 1992), where one of the central characters is Patriarch Nikon, and the action spans from XVII cent. to modern times, offers interesting insights into his theory of history. In order to better understand Russian history, Sharov considers peoples and events from different epochs as if they were contemporary. People creates their mythology and history, and then follows the pattern set by this mythology and history. I would like to look into his representation of individual and historical memory.